

Message Text

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S E C R E T LAGOS 8769

EXDIS

HELSINKI FOR CAT DELEGATION FOR MARTIN CHESHES

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PCAT PARM US XA UR
SUBJECT: US-SOVIET CONVENTIONAL ARMS TALKS: AFRICA

REF: STATE 178349

1. ON JULY 17 DCM DISCUSSED THE FORTHCOMING US-SOVIET ARMS TALKS ALONG LINES REFTEL WITH AMBASSADOR SAGAY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF MEA'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DEPARTMENT. SAGAY THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT THAT NUCLEAR ARMS TALKS BETWEEN THE SUPERPOWERS PROCEED SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH ANY CONVENTIONAL ARMS TALKS, AND DCM ASSURED HIM THAT THIS IN FACT IS OCCURRING.

2. SAGAY SAID HE KNEW OF NO PRESENT PLANS FOR TALKS AMONG AFRICAN COUNTRIES ON THE POSSIBILITY OF REDUCING ARMS TRANSFERS TO AFRICA. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO MAKE PROGRESS ON AN OVERALL REDUCTION OF ARMS FOR AFRICA AND STILL INSURE THAT EACH COUNTRY RECEIVES THE ARMS WHICH IT REQUIRES FOR ITS SELF-DEFENSE. A BIG INCREASE IN ARMS IS NEEDED FOR THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, HE SAID, AND THERE MAY BE SOME AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHICH ARE UNDERARMED. IT WOULD PROBABLY MAKE
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SENSE IN DISCUSSING ARMS TRANSFERS TO AFRICA TO FOCUS ON THOSE AREAS WHERE TENSION IS GREATEST, SUCH AS ETHIOPIA-SOMALIA, RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA. SAGAY ALSO COMMENTED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT FAVORS A REDUCTION IN THE WORLD-WIDE LEVEL OF ARMS BUT THAT THE QUANTITY OF ARMS AVAILABLE IN AFRICA IS OBVIOUSLY PEANUTS COMPARED TO THE STOCKS OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS ELSEWHERE. HE SAW THE ARMS LIMITATION PROBLEM AS EASIER TO APPROACH IN LATIN AMERICA

THAN IN AFRICA BECAUSE OF THE LARGE STOCKS OF ARMS ALREADY
POSSESSED BY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SAGAY IS BRAND NEW ON THE JOB AND HIS
UNPREPARED REMARKS SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A FORMAL STATEMENT
OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION, WE BELIEVE
THAT THEY ARE TYPICAL OF THE CAUTION AND SKEPTICISM WITH WHICH THE
FMG, TO THE EXTENT THAT IT HAS CONSIDERED THE PROBLEM AT ALL,
CURRENTLY REGARDS THE PROSPECTS FOR LIMITING ARMS TRANSFERS TO
AFRICA.
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